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HEARING ON H. R. 17430.

A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE PURCHASE OF FORT FISHER, IN THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, AND TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL PARK THEREAT, ETC.

COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Wednesday, January 19, 1910.

At 11.40 o'clock a. m. the committee, Hon. John A. T. Hull (chairman) presiding, began the consideration of H. R. 17430, entitled "A bill to provide for the purchase of Fort Fisher, in the State of North Carolina, and to establish a national park thereat, etc.," introduced by Hon. H. L. Godwin, a Representative in Congress from the State of North Carolina.

Mr. Godwin, Mr. Chairman, I want you to hear this delegation in behalf of my Fort Fisher bill, to establish a national park at Fort Fisher, N. C. The first speaker I will introduce will be Major Risley.

STATEMENT OF EDWIN H. RISLEY, ESQ., OF UTICA, N. Y.

Mr. RISLEY, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, the House bill No. 17430 is not in the shape which our committee of the Blue and Gray of Fort Fisher wish it to be placed. The bill as introduced appropriated \$80,000 for the purchase of land on the site of old Fort Fisher. We have gone over it with the bankers and those who are acquainted with values in Wilmington, and we have agreed that that whole point from Craigs Landing to the end of the peninsula, between Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, can be bought, about 1,800 acres, for approximately \$30,000. We think that is all it is worth, and we recommend, if your committee shall see fit to report this bill, that you report the bill which we will offer the amendment to.

Now, a single word about the setting aside of the ground of Fort Fisher for a national park, a national reservation. You, gentlemen, may know, or may not, some of you, that that fortification was captured on January 15, 1865, after the most violent assault that was ever made in the history of warfare. The Government of the United States had over 60 gunboats that poured into that fortification on an average of 115 shells from daylight in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the assault was made by the First Brigade of the Second Division of the Tenth Army Corps, under General Terry. The regiment of which I had the honor to be a member led that assault, and for seven hours traverse after traverse was carried until the fortification surrendered. A more gallant defense was never made, nor was a more gallant assault ever made than that on Fort Fisher. We have felt for a long time that that ought to be signalized by making it a national park for this reason, gentlemen: It is the first, and I think the only, joint attack of the army and the navy.

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during the civil war that resulted in successful assault. When Fort Fisher fell, the last breath of the Confederacy was taken out, because it was the only open port on the Atlantic coast, and the Confederates were no longer able to sell cotton or acquire arms and munitions of war to carry on the fight, and really the last battle of the civil war, outside of the Weldon Plank Road, Appomattox, and the battles incident to the movement of Grant south of Petersburg.

I want to call your attention to this fact: Three years ago in January the people of Wilmington invited the Union survivors of the First Brigade of the Second Division of the Tenth Army Corps to come down and visit them, forty-three years after we had occupied Wilmington and taken Fort Fisher. We went, 71 of us, and we were entertained in a very hospitable way by the residents. We went down and walked over the old fortifications, and we agreed that we should ask the Government of the United States to make it a reservation. In September of last year we invited the people of Wilmington, the survivors of the Confederate army who participated in that engagement, to come to Utica. My old regiment was the Fourth Oneida. The Confederates and they were given a most hospitable entertainment, and it was the most inspiring sight to see the old Confederates and the Unions walking up our main street hand in hand. One hundred thousand people witnessed it—13,000 school children; and at a public meeting in our armory we had present the Vice-President of the United States, Senator Root, and Governor Hughes, who made excellent addresses, and at the close of it a proposition was made to ask Congress to set that battlefield aside as a national park. It was unanimously carried, and I believe, and I think it can be demonstrated, that that sentiment of the Blue and the Gray who fought at Fort Fisher would be a proper symbol of a peace offering to both Union veterans and veterans of the Confederacy.

Now, gentlemen, I know of no sentiment, I know of no principle, that is dearer to the American people than the sacrifices made during those four years of ugly warfare, and the time has come when the North and South should be united even stronger, if it were necessary, than in the Spanish-American war, because the great leader of the Union forces in the civil war, you remember, at Gettysburg said that the chords of tender memory which sprung from the grave of every man who had suffered touched every heart.

We want this appropriation of \$30,000 to buy that land and make it a public park in the interest of peace and harmony, and I think Brother Smith, who surrendered to a corporal of my regiment with three other men, will say to you that the union of the blue and the gray in North Carolina has done more than all the preaching that he and the other clergymen in North Carolina ever preached for the last forty years. I will ask Mr. Smith to say a word.

STATEMENT OF REV. J. A. SMITH, OF WILMINGTON, N. C.

MR. SMITH. Gentlemen, this is the third time I have appeared before the committee. I do not know whether many of you remember it, unless it is your honorable chairman, Mr. Hull, and our good old friend, Brother Bradley, who I think was in that charge. I am exceedingly anxious that you gentlemen give us this bill. It is a duty you owe to one of your citizens here in Washington. We had a meet-

ing of the executive committee of our association and we were authorized to elect a president to take the place of General Curtis, that ideal American soldier who led the charge there and lost an eye and received two wounds in each of his shoulders. On that ever memorable day he climbed up the third traverse, which is still intact, with his sword, and he directed the movements which resulted in the capture of the fortification. We elected as his successor Major Reeves, of your city, as our president, and he left a part of himself down there at Fort Fisher; he lost a leg there. And it is such men as that who are before you, and you ought to honor them.

A national park would be an object lesson to all the civilized nations of the earth. There is no doubt about that. Pardon a personal allusion here. When I appeared before you two years ago I showed you a picture of Comrade Seely and myself clasping hands at Fisher's Bloody Gate the time of the reunion. The facts of the case were simply these: When I was captured I was captured by Seely. I was not a preacher then, and the King's English was rather mutilated at that time. We were both red hot. At the reunion in 1907 Seely and myself met and recognized each other, and in the presence of hundreds of citizens and old soldiers Seely said: "Let's you and I, in behalf of the blue and the gray, clasp the hands of eternal friendship and undying brotherly love," and we clasped hands, and I believe that my comrades who are present here who wore the blue and the gray will tell you that that represented the sentiment of the Fort Fisher Survivors' Association, and, as Major Risley says, that reunion of the blue and the gray there on that battlefield of Fisher has done more to conciliate the two sections than all the preachers from the snow-capped mountains of Vermont to the Everglades of Florida—and I am not going back on the clergy in that statement, either. I enjoyed that reunion—I am not departing from the ancient orthodoxy—I enjoyed that reunion in the magnificent city of Utica spiritually more than I ever did a protracted meeting in my life [laughter], and I felt like one of my comrades there, who was a sergeant in my company and lost a brother right there at Fisher's Bloody Gate. He was one of our speakers up there, and he enjoyed the hospitality and brotherly kindness of the citizens in Utica in such sublime degree that he said: "Of course, when I die I expect to go to heaven, but if I don't find Utica there I am going to pack my grip and leave."

To show you about this object lesson, when Mr. Godwin introduced me to Mr. Roosevelt, when I appeared here before you, I took the idea in my head that I would give the President a picture of Mr. Seely and myself clasping hands. I explained its history, and he said "Comrade, I must have this picture." "Well," I said, "Mr. Roosevelt, when I get back home I will send you a bran spang new one." He said, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. I must have this picture." I gave it to him. He went and stood in front of one of the ambassadors—I have forgotten whether he was from Germany or France or Hungary, or where—and he said "I want to show you fellows from across the sea this picture. Here is a picture that is realistic in its character. It represents two men who met as foes forty-two years before this picture was taken," and he said, addressing the entire embassy, "Gentlemen, you see those clasped hands. It shows you fellows across the big blue sea the stuff out of

which American soldiers are made." I mention this personal incident to confirm my statement that that will be an object lesson to the whole civilized world, and I want to see a monument there towering above all other monuments, with this inscription on it: "On the 15th day of January, 1907, there was a victory here gained, a grander victory than the victory of 1865, a victory of peace, and this monument indicates that the olive branch of peace waves triumphantly over the land of the free and the home of the brave." I believe this Fort Fisher remission and the movement for a monument there has done more for the healing of the North and the South than anything else.

STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN B. JONES, OF UTICA, N. Y.

MR. JONES. Mr. Chairman, I have very little to say, practically what I said to you a year ago. If we are going to have this site, give it to us just as soon as you can. Our boys are passing away very fast, and it is the great desire of their lives to go down there and dedicate that ground, as many of them as possible, and we want to take advantage of the time to get our great State of New York, which is very generous in those matters, to erect monuments there which we propose to have erected by the State of New York as soon as possible, because we who are so much interested in this national park down there to commemorate this great battle have got to see it. Our sons and our friends who did not partake in that battle have not the same interest that we have. I ask you in all sincerity, give us this appropriation and let us begin the work that we want to see completed before we pass away.

STATEMENT OF MR. H. C. McQUEEN, OF WILMINGTON, N. C.

MR. RISLEY. I would like to have Mr. McQueen make a statement here with reference to the value. Mr. McQueen is a banker of position in Wilmington, and he will tell you whether this price which we have put into this bill is a reasonable price for the land.

MR. McQUEEN. Mr. Chairman, I think it is a fair price for this land. This point there is a very eligible place for a resort, and some capitalists have been looking at it with that view. So it has a value of that kind. But we have been over the question with the owners of part of this land, and we feel that \$30,000 is a reasonable price for it. This bill that proposes to appropriate \$80,000 was intended to include something else—to build some great memorial house there, I think, or something of that sort. We do not want to take that into consideration at present. My deliberate opinion is that \$30,000 will buy this land, and there is no commercialism in it whatever. The people who own it, if it is bought, will get the money for it. If we have any influence in that way we will see to that.

Now, gentlemen, I expected to address you, but my friends Mr. Risley and Mr. Smith have said to you all that I think can be said about it. You might ask this question, that if this battle of Fort Fisher was such an important incident, why more has not been said about it? I think I can explain that. The great events that came immediately afterwards—the breaking of Lee's lines at Petersburg and his retreat and surrender, Sherman's march through Georgia

and the Carolinas, the murder of Mr. Lincoln, Johnston's surrender at Greensboro—all these came along so overwhelmingly that the battle of Fort Fisher for the time was lost sight of and forgotten. As to the importance of the battle in a military way, Wilmington was undoubtedly the only open port, all the others having been closed up either by capture or effective blockade. Wilmington never was and could not be effectively blockaded. I could explain that to you. The coast there is shaped so that blockaders could not lie close in and guard these inlets. There were two inlets there. One of them has been closed up since the war by the Government. Cape Fear comes down there between these two inlets, and it juts away out into the Atlantic, and beyond that the Frying Pan Shoals spread 15 or 20 miles farther out, and it made it necessary for these blockaders to lie away off to sea. Consequently, these fast blockade runners could come in there almost when they pleased and go out when they pleased. The State of North Carolina owned one of these blockade runners—I know about her—the *Vance*, named in honor of the governor of the State, ex-Senator Vance. She made 12 round trips before she was lost.

Mr. JAMES PARKER. Captured, not lost.

Mr. McQUEEN. She was lost to the Confederacy, anyway. Another thing, Wilmington was a vast storehouse there, and the supplies she brought in, which she exchanged in Nassau and Bermuda for this cotton and naval stores she took out of there, were the only subsistence the southern people had, especially the armies, and more especially the army of northern Virginia. If the Government of the United States had realized the importance of this point and taken Fort Fisher a year before, the war would have ended then instead of a year after. There is no doubt about it in the world. That is the importance of it from a military point of view.

You might say, why is this southern man here who fought in the war asking you to celebrate his defeat? If you could have seen these reunions that these gentlemen have spoken of you would not need to ask that question. The men who fought out that war have put it behind them with all its bitterness, and they have joined hearts and hands to efface from memory every vestige of sectionalism, and shoulder to shoulder they are marching to the drumbeat of the great and wonderful prosperity of this country. The Fort Fisher survivors, the blue and the gray, ask you to give them a chance to honor their comrades who lost their lives in this great fight. I thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. BRADLEY. Mr. Chairman, may I ask Mr. McQueen a question? The CHAIRMAN. Certainly.

Mr. BRADLEY. Mr. McQueen, did the operations on land at Fort Fisher cover so wide an area as 1,800 acres?

Mr. McQUEEN. No, sir. Fort Fisher is situated about a mile and a half above the point of land there, and Battery Buchanan was on this point, a mile and a half below Fort Fisher. There were several batteries between the points facing the ocean. But the fort proper does not occupy all of this land. The attack from the fleet, of course, was on the whole front, all the way down to Battery Buchanan. As to the gallantry of the troops in this fight, I do not suppose there ever was such a bombardment as that in the world. The men in the fort had been for three days and nights without a chance to eat any-

thing or to cook anything. They had to be packed in bombproofs to prevent being killed, all except a few who manned the guns. This assaulting column came in upon them in overwhelming numbers, but this fight, nevertheless, lasted for seven hours, from 3 o'clock in the afternoon until 10 at night.

Mr. BRADLEY. I asked the question for this reason: The purchase of land and setting aside of reservations has in the past led up to enormous appropriations afterwards for improvements, making roadways, etc., as in the matter of the Vicksburg battlefield, Gettysburg, Chattanooga, and other battlefields. It is the large appropriations that afterwards follow that make Congress at this time timid about buying battlefield sites. Would it not be advisable in this instance for you to condense this area somewhat—in fact, very considerably?

Mr. McQUEEN. We would, of course, rather have the whole thing, but if necessary to get the battle ground proper we would have to do that.

Mr. TILSON. You say 1,800 acres; there are only 300 or 400 mentioned here.

Mr. GODWIN. The committee has substituted a bill for that bill.

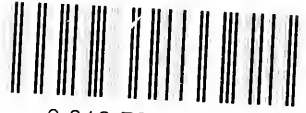
Mr. RISLEY. Permit me to say one word. The fortification at Fort Fisher is at the narrow point on the peninsula. We take the ground back to Craigs Landing as the only point on the river where vessels could land at Fort Fisher. Now, the land beyond Fort Fisher—that is, beyond Battery Buchanan, or the land batteries—is of very little value. It might be used by and by, after the park was made of the battle ground, for hotels and other things down there, and the land is not a large item beyond Battery Buchanan. We do not care so much about it, but we think we would have to pay practically about the same as we would to take the 1,800 acres, and the farther end of the peninsula would be, outside of a little portion of it, in condition that you could not improve it, because the tide is coming over it most of the time, at least part of the time, when there are high tides, and we would not like to have Fort Fisher take the center of that peninsula and leave that point out there where it could be used for all sorts of purposes other than that which benefited the park.

(Thereupon, at 12 o'clock noon, the committee adjourned until to-morrow, Thursday, January 20, 1910, at 10.30 o'clock a. m.)





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